

## Message Text

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APPROVED BY D:MR.INGERSOLL

ARA:WGBOWDLER

ARA/MGT:KACKERMAN

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M:MR. BROWN

P:MR. SISCO

S/S- MR. GAMMON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: APER, AR

SUBJECT: PERSONNEL REDUCTIONS IN THE U.S. DIPLOMATIC  
MISSION, BUENOS AIRES

1. THERE FOLLOWS TEXT OF LETTER FROM DEPUTY SECRETARY  
DEFENSE CLEMENTS TO DEPUTY SECRETARY INGERSOLL CONCERNING  
PROPOSED REDUCTIONS IN DOD PERSONNEL IN ARGENTINA: QUOTE.  
DEAR BOB, THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF 26 NOVEMBER  
REGARDING ADDITIONAL PROPOSED REDUCTIONS IN DOD PERSONNEL  
ASSIGNED IN ARGENTINA. AS YOU INDICATE, THESE PROPOSED  
REDUCTIONS WOULD FOLLOW SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS MADE IN  
JULY 1974 DURING WHICH MANNING IN THE U.S. MILITARY GROUP,  
ARGENTINA, WAS REDUCED FROM 29 TO 20 U.S. MILITARY PERSON-  
NEL. THESE EARLIER REDUCTIONS WERE ACCEPTED BY THE DEPART-  
MENT OF DEFENSE AS TEMPORARY IN NATURE, AND THE CHAIRMAN,  
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JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, AND I TOOK THE POSITION THAT

SUBSEQUENT REDUCTIONS IN ARGENTINA WOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED UNTIL A NEW SECURITY ASSESSMENT HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED, UNTIL THE FIRST REDUCTION HAD BEEN FULLY ASSESSED, AND UNTIL THE PROBLEM OF SANCTIONS IN SECTION 620 (A)(3), FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT, HAD BEEN RESOLVED.

THE AMBASSADOR'S PRESENT PLAN WAS ARRIVED AT WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH USCINCSO OR WITH THE ARGENTINEARMED

FORCES AS FORESEEN IN FORMAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. FURTHER, WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THE PROPOSED REDUCED MANNING LEVELS OF THE U.S. MILITARY GROUP FROM 20 TO 13, AND A REDUCTION FROM 11 TO 7 IN THE DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE, ARE INSUFFICIENT TO ACCOMPLISH PROPERLY THE DOD MISSION IN ARGENTINA.

WE FULLY APPRECIATE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE TERRORIST SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. HOWEVER, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THESE REDUCTIONS ARE BEING DECIDED UNILATERALLY AND WITHOUT REGARD TO THE FORMAL MISSION AGREEMENTS IN EFFECT BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ARGENTINA. THE U.S. MILITARY ACCEPTS ASSIGNMENTS IN HIGH RISK AREAS AS A NECESSARY ASPECT OF MILITARY SERVICE. IT WOULD CAST US IN AN UNFAVORABLE LIGHT IF WE WERE TO BACK DOWN IN THE FACE OF A THREAT WHICH ARGENTINE MILITARY PERSONNEL FACE TO A MUCH GREATER MEASURE AND WHICH WILL STILL BE FACED BY THE DEPENDENT WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF THE EMBASSY STAFF.

CONSIDERING THE ABOVE FACTORS AND ASSUMING THAT THE TERRORIST ACTIVITY POSES A THREAT AS INDICATED BY THE AMBASSADOR, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE REMOVAL OF DEPENDENTS FROM ARGENTINA SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BEFORE MAKING FURTHER REDUCTIONS OF OFFICIAL U.S. PERSONNEL.

AMBASSADOR HILL CALLED ON ME ON 20 NOVEMBER AND PRESENTED HIS CASE FOR THE REDUCTIONS HE RECOMMENDED. I REMAINED UNCONVINCED THAT ADDITIONAL MILITARY REDUCTIONS WERE NECESSARY AT THIS TIME AND INFORMED THE AMBASSADOR THAT THIS WAS STILL MY OWN AS WELL AS THE JCS POSITION.

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IN OUR VIEW, THE SECURITY SITUATION WHILE BAD DOES NOT WARRANT FURTHER WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL. OUR RECOMMENDATION AT THIS TIME IS TO WITHDRAW ALL DEPENDENTS IMMEDIATELY AND KEEP ANY FURTHER REDUCTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL UNDER ADVISEMENT. SINCERELY,  
W. P. CLEMENTS. UNQUOTE.

2. OUR INITIAL REACTION TO DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS'

COUNTERPROPOSAL TO WITHDRAW ALL DEPENDENTS IMMEDIATELY WHILE TAKING NO ACTION WITH RESPECT TO MILITARY PERSONNEL IS THAT IT DOES NOT APPRECIABLY LOWER THE VULNERABILITY OF THE MISSION TO THE INCREASED TERRORIST THREAT. WHILE THERE IS SOME POTENTIAL DANGER TO DEPENDENTS, WE BELIEVE THREAT TO THEM DERIVES ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY FROM THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH AND PHYSICAL PROXIMITY TO PRINCIPALS. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE ONLY EFFECTIVE STEP TO REDUCE MISSION VULNERABILITY TO TERRORIST ATTACK IS TO REDUCE NUMBER OF OFFICIAL PERSONNEL. FURTHERMORE, YOU RECOMMENDED, AND OTHER AGENCIES HAVE ACCEPTED, THAT PERSONNEL

REDUCTIONS BE CARRIED OUT IN ALL ELEMENTS OF THE MISSION. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT UNWILLINGNESS BY DOD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MIGHT RESULT IN AN UNDESIRABLY DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF MILITARY PERSONNEL IN MISSION, AND MIGHT HAVE ADVERSE IMPACT ON MORALE OF THOSE MISSION SECTIONS HARDPRESSED TO MEET WORK REQUIREMENTS WITH REDUCED PERSONNEL. IN WASHINGTON, DOD POSITION WOULD BE DISINCENTIVE TO COOPERATION BY OTHER AGENCIES IN MEETING TERRORIST THREAT.

3. AS TO HOW TO PROCEED ON THIS MATTER, DEPARTMENT BELIEVES WE SHOULD PRESS FOR REDUCTIONS AS YOU HAVE RECOMMENDED. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR VIEWS ON POINTS CONTAINED IN SECRETARY CLEMENTS' LETTER. SISCO

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